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Training Gets Real for Surface Force Independent Duty Corpsman School

BY VJOHNSON – FEBRUARY 14, 2014

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The Virtual Reality Medical Simulation project consists of two virtual reality rooms; one simulates a shipboard environment and the other a desert. Each room features a 20-foot dual projection screen, a cutting-edge audio system, a third generation medical simulation manikin, smoke machines and movie studio quality props. (Photo courtesy of Surface Warfare Medical Institute)

The Surface Warfare Medical Institute’s (SWMI) Surface Force Independent Duty Corpsman (IDC) School will unveil two state-of-the-art Virtual Reality Medical Simulation rooms at an open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony on Feb. 14 at 9 a.m.

The Virtual Reality Medical Simulation project – part of a \$7.6 million building renovation to enhance the learning environment for students and instructors – consists of two virtual reality rooms; one simulates a shipboard environment and the other a desert. Each room features a 20-foot dual projection screen, a cutting-edge audio system, a third generation medical simulation manikin, smoke machines and movie studio quality props.

“Construction of these training spaces will allow students to experience caring for trauma and advanced cardiac life support scenarios in a controlled environment prior to deployment,” said Cmdr. Jeremy Hawker, officer in charge at SWMI. “Hyper-realistic training allows us also to support not only IDC students, but any operational medical asset in the region wishing to practice medical skills and teamwork before being placed in real world operational setting.”

Both virtual reality rooms were built with moveable walls and include a variety of props that allow each room to simulate different scenarios within their primary environments. The



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shipboard room can be modified to place students on the forecastle of a destroyer or in an engine room while the second room simulates a third-world village or a desert. Instructors can use these rooms to train IDC students in more than 50 different medicine and trauma-based scenarios.

“Instructors will have the ability to add stressors including smoke, dim lighting, sound, background video and various props,” says George Frausto, simulation program manager. “Additionally, the virtual reality rooms will provide instructors an alternate method of presenting material and breaking down complex subjects to students in a way that encourages active participation while challenging their critical thinking skills in a hands-on environment.”

The IDC program at SWMI is a year-long Navy Medicine school that prepares surface force hospital corpsmen to provide advanced medical care and treatment independently of medical officers. Upon graduation, most students receive orders to deployable units, either aboard ship or with the Fleet Marine Force. The virtual reality rooms will be incorporated throughout training to help students prepare not only for testing, but more importantly, their future roles as providers, according to Frausto.

“Having the ability to take students out of the classroom and place them in a realistic environment to better evaluate their performance under stress is invaluable,” said Master Chief Hospital Corpsman Brad Kowitz, IDC program director. “The instructors will now have a tool to better assess the specific areas of training each student needs to focus on so that we can produce more competent Independent Duty Corpsmen. Additionally, with the ability to test themselves in a controlled environment, students can better understand their strengths and weaknesses, and feel more confident of their abilities in the end.”

The Surface Force IDC School at SWMI graduates approximately 160 students each year.



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